

Weekly Column for May 10, 2007

Good afternoon everyone and welcome to the beautiful Northeast. What a glorious week it has been.

Yesterday we held a press conference and made a very important announcement regarding giving back to you, the taxpayers, and showing you that there is a return on your investment into this great City.

Yesterday I stood with the five members of the City Council that try and communicate with my administration on a weekly, if not daily basis- Mark Wojcik, Mark McGrath, Bob Krogh, Carolin Collier and Hank Bauer. They have worked with me to make difficult budgeting decisions- tough decisions that put us on a track for future success. Today we are in good financial health. Today, the New York State Comptroller's Office uses the City of Troy as a model for responsible budgeting and financial planning.

We have certainly come a long way. We are a strong and stable City. We are a place that investors not only call home, but one where they proudly announce one project after another.

While we continue to make Troy a city attractive to developers and business owners, we haven't lost sight that our residents and our neighborhoods are the most important part of our City. The taxpayers of Troy have endured a lot. We respect that. We have always acted in their best interest, as they are our most important investors. The residents of Troy have invested in their City and while we have provided them with the best services possible, we have always known they deserve even more.

I am happy to announce that over the next several months we will embark on a Capital Improvement plan that will spend more than \$2.5 million in our City. Out of that money more than \$2 million will be spent on paving roads. I drive the streets like all of you, and I am well aware that we need more paving.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars will also be spent on park improvements, new public safety vehicles for our Fire Department and Police Department, and new snow removal equipment.

I need to thank the residents, because without them this could not happen. When I presented my first budget to the taxpayers of Troy in 2004, I asked them for one thing- trust. Trust that we were operating the City in a more fiscally prudent manner, a method that would reward us in the near future for difficult decisions made in the present. We have eliminated hundreds of thousands of dollars in annual patronage jobs, cut back in areas of unnecessary spending like consultants and travel, and asked our department heads to make cuts across the board.

We have fought for years to break from the doldrums of poor financial management that led the City down a destructive path of debt. And while we have a long way to go, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. This is not as glitzy as announcing a new hundred million dollar development, but it is just as important. This is for the residents. As I said before, this is the beginning of their return on investment.

I wish I was standing here announcing this on a yearly basis, but the fact is that the people in office before me made the decision in 2003 to use the entire allotment of what was then called Distressed Cities Aid to fill gaps in the budget that they created. That was our only source of a Capital Fund. Though the trek has sometimes been difficult, we have fought our way back to this point. This year, for the first time, we budgeted a recurring amount into our spending plan. We will increase it next year. And as we continue to be prudent with our finances we will continue to improve our city.

The residents of this City have been very patient. I thank them for their continued support, constant suggestions, and unwavering resolve.

Thanks everyone, and have a terrific weekend!

Harry J Tutunjian
Mayor of Troy

P.S. Happy Mother's Day, mom!